

may file an application on behalf of him or herself and the missing owner. Such application shall be accompanied by a written explanation and shall state the last known address of the missing owner. Notice of the filing of the application shall be forwarded by the Office to the missing owner at the last known address. If such notice is returned to the Office undelivered, or if the address of the missing owner is unknown, notice of the filing of the application shall be published once in the Official Journal. Prior to the issuance of the certificate, a missing owner may join in an application by filing a written explanation. A certificate obtained by less than all of the joint owners under this paragraph conveys the same rights and privileges to said owners as though all of the original owners had joined in an application.

**§97.15 Assigned varieties and certificates.**

In case the whole or a part interest in a variety is assigned, the application shall be made by the owner or one of the persons identified in §97.13. However, the certificate may be issued to the assignee, or jointly to the owner and the assignee, when a part interest in a variety is assigned.

[58 FR 42435, Aug. 9, 1993, as amended at 60 FR 17189, Apr. 4, 1995]

**§97.16 Amendment by applicant.**

An application may be amended before or after the first examination and action by the Office, after the second or subsequent examination or reconsideration as specified in §97.107, or when and as specifically required by the examiner. Such amendment may include a specification that seed of the variety be sold by variety name only as a class of certified seed, if not previously specified or if previously declined. Once an affirmative specification is made, no amendment to reverse such a specification will be permitted unless the variety has not been sold and labeled or publication made in any manner that the variety is to be sold by variety name, only as a class of certified seed.

**§97.17 Papers of completed application to be retained.**

The papers submitted with a completed application shall be retained by the Office except as provided in §97.23(c). After issuance of a certificate of protection the Office will furnish copies of the application and related papers to any person upon payment of the specified fee.

**§97.18 Applications handled in confidence.**

(a) Pending applications shall be handled in confidence. Except as provided below, no information may be given by the Office respecting the filing of an application, the pendency of any particular application, or the subject matter of any particular application. Also, nor will access be given to or copies furnished of any pending application or papers relating thereto, without written authority of the applicant, or his or her assignee or attorney or agent. Exceptions to the above may be made by the Commissioner in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552 and §1.4 of this title, and upon a finding that such action is necessary to the proper conduct of the affairs of the Office, or to carry out the provisions of any Act of Congress, or as provided in sections 56 or 57 of the Act and §97.19.

(b) Abandoned applications shall not be open to public inspection. However, if an abandoned application is directly referred to in an issued certificate and is available, it may be inspected or copies obtained by any person on written request, and with written authority received from the applicant. Abandoned applications shall not be returned.

(c) Decisions of the Commissioner on abandoned applications not otherwise open to public inspection (see paragraph (b) of this section) may be published or made available for publication at the Commissioner's discretion. When it is proposed to release such a decision, the applicant shall be notified directly or through the attorney or agent of record, and a time, not less than 30 days, shall be set for presenting objections.